

REPORT

Of the Committee of Ways and Means, to whom was referred a Resolution of the House of Representatives of 21st January, 1824, instructing said committee to inquire into the expediency of appropriating \$5,000 for the use of the Library of Congress, accompanying a bill for effecting that object.

FEBRUARY 24, 1824.

Read, and, with the bill, committed to a committee of the whole House.

The Committee of Ways and Means, to whom was referred a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 21st day of January, 1824, instructing them "to inquire into the expediency of appropriating five thousand dollars for the use of the Library of Congress,"

REPORT:

That they find, upon inquiry, that the sum which it has been usual to appropriate, annually, for the use of the Library, is little more than sufficient to purchase *Laws, Reports of cases, periodical publications*, and such works as the Library Committee are annually under the necessity of purchasing. The balance is so small, as, generally, to confine the purchases merely to works of the day; and if, on any occasion, the committee are enabled to purchase a standard work, the cost is augmented nearly a hundred per cent. by the duties on importation. and the profits of the bookseller.

By their own observation, as well as by a reference to the gentlemen charged with the particular superintendence over this subject, the committee have discovered the Library of Congress, in its present state, to be defective in all the principal branches of literature; and they deem it of the first necessity, that this deficiency should be speedily supplied, at least, in the important branches of *Law, Politics, Commerce, History and Geography*, as most useful to the Members of Congress.

It is believed, also, that most of the works, which are now required for the foregoing purposes, are not republished in the United States, and that, for this reason, as for motives of economy, it is deemed advisable to make the purchases in Europe; but this cannot be effected without an appropriation considerably larger than that annually given.

It is known to the committee, that a drawback, to a considerable amount, is allowed on the exportation of books from England, of which the Library Committee could avail themselves in their purchases, and a discount of twenty-five per cent. is allowed by all the booksellers in London, on the catalogue prices, where purchases to any considerable amount are made; and it is believed a saving of more than fifty per cent. may be effected, by importing books from Europe. A much larger saving might be made on French books; but the committee are of opinion that it would be better to purchase English books, and English translations of foreign books, in all cases where such translations have been made. They would propose, only to import such standard works, in foreign languages, as have not been translated, and of those, only such as cannot be dispensed with.

When the committee consider, not only the utility, but the absolute necessity of an extensive and judiciously selected library, for the use of Congress; when they reflect upon its advantages, for the purposes as well of amusement as instruction, they are persuaded that it cannot be too early supplied with all the important standard works, in every department. Nor can they perceive any well founded objection to an appropriation, for this object, of a sum very little exceeding the amount, which individual taste and liberality often annually bestow upon private selections.

The committee believe, that the defects in the present library cannot be supplied for a less sum than *five thousand dollars*, which, in their opinion, may be afforded without inconvenience to the public resources; and they therefore report a bill.